

LINCOLN LEGACY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting, May 13, 2026 4:00 pm

Busey Bank Meeting Room, Champaign Public Library, Room 222

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:59 p.m.

2. Roll Call: Members Present: Barb Oehlschlaeger-Garvey, Ray Cunningham, Barb Wysocki, Pat Cain, Mark Hanson, Allyson Smerz, Adele Suslick; Members Absent: Kay Grabow. Eric Thorsland has resigned from the County Board. We expect the County Board to replace him.

3. Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda was made by Adele Suslick. Barb Wysocki seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes: March 2026, Motion to approve the minutes was made by Mark Hanson. Ray Cunningham seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Public Participation: There was no public participation.

7. Old Business

A. General Updates

Adele Suslick noted that the Champaign County History Museum will be opening its American 250 exhibit downstairs in the Champaign Public Library in late June.

Pat Cain mentioned that he has been working with Looking for Lincoln and the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area on the LEAD Academy, Spirit of Lincoln Youth Academy for Middle School, and Early High School students. There will be thirty students with adult mentors. They will be learning leadership skills with the backdrop of the life and times of Abraham Lincoln. This is happening in late June also. He is also working with them to develop more opportunities for younger audiences.

Mark Hanson noted that the Museum of the Grand Prairie will be mounting an online exhibit on lighting devices in the museum's collection from the time of the founding of the country.

Barb O-G noted that she had been contacted by Looking for Lincoln about a new exhibit they were putting together on Lincoln and Women. It would be similar to the Underground Railroad exhibit and would travel around the state. Suggestions are encouraged. Barb O-G mentioned Elizabeth Keckley, women in New Salem, and local stories like those of Julia Taft Bayne, a Champaign resident. Barb O-G will send more information.

Loving Lincoln by Stacy Lynn, was a book about Lincoln and women that Allyson Smerz mentioned in this context.

B. Law Day Debrief

Barb Wysocki reported that the Law Day event went well, with roughly five hundred students participating. While the initial group that visited the Lincoln exhibit and area was small, by midday the group swelled to over seventy. The courthouse staff did most of the planning and was very efficient in their planning. The students participated in a mock trial, listened to staff members talk about their jobs and visited the Lincoln exhibit and listened to Barb Wysocki, Barb Oehlschlaeger-Garvey and Steve Beckett talk about Lincoln. Students were learning about courthouse staffing and challenged to think of themselves as potential workers there. Barb O-G commented that she thought most of the students we saw got something out of their visit, learned something about Lincoln. Barb O-G also said that we were grateful to Steve Beckett for his assistance that day. She said that the courthouse is not accustomed to this sort of event, nor are we, and that there were some overwhelming moments when we had too many students. Barb Wysocki said this was the largest size group we've ever had to deal with. There were some people who commented that they were amazed that they had no idea the Lincoln exhibit was there.

Barb O-G commented that the courthouse staff has recently maintained the Lincoln exhibit and it looks a lot better. Improvements include turning up the sound, dusting, floor mopping, and burnt-out lights replaced. Barb O-G commented that she will contact Taylor Studios to see if we can obtain a backup copy of the program on the hard drive in the Lincoln exhibit.

Barb O-G and Pat Cain commented that, in preparation for the Law Day event, panels and a case were installed in the courthouse near the vending machines. Entitled *And Justice for All* it includes artifacts relevant to the courthouse (from the Champaign County Historical Archives and the Museum of the Grand Prairie), a panel about the history of the courthouse building and a panel about the courthouse importance to the community.

C. Planning for Courthouse Event August 22, 2026.

Barb O-G said we needed to be planning the 125th anniversary of the 1901 courthouse Barb Wysocki said it is the courthouse staff's show. They are all aware of the multi-day celebration that occurred in 1901. We probably won't be copying that model as ambitiously. Barb Wysocki discussed the essay and poster contests for schools associated with Law Day which had a weak response. CCMN is having the same problem with their online art exhibit for the America 250th, The word didn't filter down to classroom teachers apparently. The outreach was to school principals, so the average teacher didn't hear about the options. This information is concerning. There will be a meeting sometime in

June to discuss further options. Adele asked if there was a standing committee to develop these events. Barb Wysocki said there was one, which no longer meets. Barb O-G said she'd like to know what their goal is. Barb O-G and Pat Cain offered that on a Saturday, it could be an Open House with some stations, children's crafts, and a birthday cake.

D. CCMN Report

Barb Wysocki shared that CCMN is hoping to hire an intern. And we will be celebrating International Museum Week in the first week of June. They are doing an advertising push that week. As usual they are still working on cooperative programming. Barb O-G recalled that they are still talking about a passport program.

Adele noted that the CCMN takes unpaid interns every year and wondered why the CCMN were planning to pay for an intern. Barb O-G discussed the discussion in the museum world about the questionable ethics of unpaid internships. Barb O-G said she would send Adele some information about that.

E. Urbana Lincoln sign update-We have gotten no response from the Hilton on the possible Looking for Lincoln sign. Brian Adams and Barb O-G will try to make an in-person request, and if that doesn't work there is a possibility of working with the Urbana Free Library, according to Pat Cain. Barb O-G said that that would be a great opportunity to talk about Samuel Busey as well. Busey signed the letter to Abraham Lincoln encouraging the appointment of David Davis to the Supreme Court, so we know he was part of the circle of Lincoln. It might be appropriate to include him in a secondary story because the Urbana Free Library is named after Samuel Busey.

7. New Business

A. Future Events-

- **Lorado Taft Sculpture in Carle Park, 1927, 100-year anniversary**
2027 marks the anniversary of the Lorado Taft sculpture of Lincoln the Lawyer currently housed in Carle Park. Barb Wysocki brought that anniversary to the notice of the Urbana Park District several years ago. They should probably be recontacted. In discussing ways in which we might celebrate this milestone, Barb O-G discussed the book *Lorado Taft: The Chicago Years* and noted that numerous photographs of Taft sculptures are held in the University Archives. Additionally, Barb O-G said, there are numerous Taft sculptures throughout the area. Pat Cain offered that there was an exhibit a couple of years ago at the University of Illinois, Springfield, entitled *Making Our History: Artists Render Lincoln's Legacy* which remains in digital format. It may be possible to borrow this exhibit. The

Urbana Free Library may like to host such an exhibit if it can be revived and he will pursue that possibility.

- **Alschuler Portrait**, 1857 or 58, 170-year anniversary

As this anniversary is quite a while off, Barb O-G said we could probably take some time to consider what we may want to do to celebrate it. She noted that this famous photo was taken 169-170 years ago near where the current Busey bank is, by the photographer Samuel Alschuler.

B. Annual Report-Barb O-G distributed the draft of the annual report of the Lincoln Legacy Committee via email and asked that everyone respond to it by the deadline. She will request a new committee rep from the County Board when she sends the annual report.

C. Other

Barb Wysocki brought forward the bookmarks which she gives to students when they have a field trip at the courthouse. They need updating, Barb O-G said she would be able to do that. We need to have something ready for the next school year.

9. Adjournment

10. Upcoming Meetings

July 8, 2026 Busey Bank Meeting Room, 222 Champaign Public Library

September 9, 2026 Busey Bank Meeting Room, 222 Champaign Public Library

November 11, 2026 Busey Bank Meeting Room, 222 Champaign Public Library